



**Commission Board Meeting
December 12, 2019
Stryker Center, Williamsburg**

Commissioners in Attendance: Matt Conrad, Abigail Gomez, Asa Jackson, Terry Buntrock, Robert Goudie, Dena Jennings, Michael Markley, Sushmita Mazumdar, Jan Monroe, Laurie Naismith, Barbara Parker, Amanda Pillion, David Trinkle.

Staff in Attendance: Janet Starke, Lucas Hall, Cathy Welborn, Casey Polczynski

Chairman Conrad called the meeting to order at 9am. He welcomed new Deputy Director Lucas Hall. He thanked Terry Buntrock, Pat Rublein and Robert Haas for helping to plan the meeting in Williamsburg. Matt also thanked the Commissioners for work done in advance on the Guidelines for Funding and the strategic plan.

Conrad recognized meeting guests: Beverly Hess, Treasurer of Virginians for the Arts and Executive Director of Center for the Arts of Greater Manassas and Prince William County; Patricia Rublein, Chair of the Williamsburg Area Arts Commission; and Robert Haas, Program Services & Security Director Williamsburg Regional Library.

Starke led the Commissioners in a participatory arts experience.

Conrad introduced Robert Haas who welcomed the Commission and thanked the VCA for touring support to bring Robert Jospe and Stephanie Nakasian to Williamsburg this year. He gave an overview of the Stryker Center

Guest Presenter

Patricia Rublein from the Williamsburg Area Arts Commission (WAAC) presented on some of the work of the Commission, local policy and impacts, including a new 1% tax for the Williamsburg Chamber and Tourism Alliance, the tourism grant group. Rublein shared a challenge which is that the Williamsburg Area Arts Commission is currently not eligible to access those tourism funds. Closer to the work of the WAAC, Commissioners are taking on a liaison role with two to three grantees that is a formal/established process to support the grantees in their cultural work. Workshops have been established to have grantees engage with each other on the topic of marketing. WAAC is developing a manual for their commissioners to assist with training and orientation to their role.

Call to Order

Matt Conrad called the meeting to order at 9:40 AM.

Minutes Approval

Conrad asked for approval of the October 2, 2019 meeting minutes. Naismith moved to adopt. Trinkle seconded. All ayes.

Updates

Virginians For the Arts (VFTA)

Beverly Hess, Treasurer and Executive Director for the Center for the Arts of Greater Manassas and Prince William County presented on behalf of VFTA. Hess reiterated that the funding goal in the year ahead is a \$1 per capita for the arts. Even as everyone awaits release of the Governor's Budget, McGuire Woods is working through an administration contract for VFTA. VaforArts.org is the website for VFTA, and VCA Commissioners are encouraged to become individual members of this organization. There will be a legislative breakfast on Thursday, Jan. 30 for Arts Advocacy Day with registration currently live on the website. On that day, VFTA will be recognized on the floors of the House and Senate, respectively.

Hess suggested that a VCA commissioner could be paired with a VFTA regional board member, who could—in turn—pair up for the Arts Advocacy Day experience. VCA Commissioners are an integral part of the advocacy effort. Hess stated the importance to advocate collectively, not individually.

Starke offered that the VCA Town Hall attendees would be a primary group for recruitment, having recently shared those lists with VFTA for that purpose.

Artist Fellowship Award Recommendations

Commissioner Jackson presented a summary of the Fellowship panel, as the Commissioner who was in attendance, reminding the group that Artist Fellowships is a grant category that was newly (re)opened for FY20. This is an established program and paneled by arts leaders, professionals, and practitioners. The discipline was *crafts*, and many of the 26 applicants teetered between pure crafts and, more so, fine arts. Each award is for \$3,500. There was some question with Colin Knight because his fellowship will take place in Europe to conduct research, but staff verified funding eligibility.

Janet stated there was a great cross section of emerging and established artists.

Goudie noted that 8 of 26 are from Richmond, asking if this is the norm. Janet suggested not, but that with it being the first year of reinstituting the program, staff recognized the challenges if fully establishing/re-establishing communications channels in order to increase awareness of the opportunities, more broadly statewide. Though with the reinstitution of the program after a 4 year hiatus, it was communicated through our usual communications channels (e-blasts (several), website, presentations) in addition to the Town Halls.

Gomez raised concern for a balance of equity, noting there the recommended (four) Fellowships lacked an even number of women and men. Also questioned artistic quality of some.

Jackson shared his notes from all questioned, validating the collective feedback of the peer panel. He further shared that the group had discussed ways to strengthen the application process, such as more specific suggestions for sample images to include.

Staff conferred briefly with Conrad to verify that there are enough unused funds that could be allocated for a fifth Fellowship, which was stated to the Commissioners.

Jennings asked about the role as commissioners; suggesting we have a policy that supports to see what happens— how do we educate the panelists?

Jackson stated that the Cultural Equity statement was shared with the panelists, noting it is not solely about racial diversity.

Gomez made a motion to approve the five artists recommended by the panel (and Commissioners) for funding (in no order): William Brown, Jayden Moore, Colin Knight, Julia Pfaff and Natassja Swift. Jennings seconded. All ayes. The motion passed.

Teaching Artist Roster Recommendations

Commissioner Parker gave a summary of the panel, as the Commissioner in attendance. There were four applicants for this review process. One application did not fit the TA Roster model, and staff is suggesting the applicant's proposed work is more suited to be of recommendation for professional development workshops (for arts professionals).

Trinkle asked about reporting requirements for Fellowship awardees and Teaching Artists. Teaching artists have no direct funds associated with their endorsement to the roster. Fellowship winners are requested to report back via a letter at the end of the grant cycle to report out how the funds were used to support their artistic practice.

Parker made a motion to approve the roster of artists recommended by the panel. Trinkle seconded. All ayes. Motion was approved.

FY2021 (2020-2021) Guidelines for Funding

Jennings, Budget and Policy Committee Chair, presented the final draft of Guidelines for Funding, inclusive of staff edits and comments received during 30 day Public Comment period.

Markley made a motion to approve. Gomez seconded. All ayes. Motion was approved.

Goudie expressed concern for the inability of organizations to apply for both GOS and Project Grants, suggesting it would be good to visit this in the next grant year.

Janet shared that, historically, budget cuts have necessitated the need to create a more equitable distribution of limited funds, and (equitable) process for organizations without the capacity to apply for both categories.

Strategic Plan 2021-20204: Work Session

External (contracted) facilitator Amy Nisenson provided an overview of the working sessions and guided the Commissioners through a process to receive and reflect on the findings of the 12 Town Halls (held between August and November. A summary of findings is provided in the Commission board book.

Parker shared conversation (from region 2) about having access to artists who have the experience and training to work with diverse populations with specialized needs.

Monroe stated that providing a brief definition or glossary of potential audiences as a list for common knowledge for the grantees.

Starke suggested that—with regards to the draft strategic plan in development--80% is intended to be outward-facing (focusing on services to the field); and 20% inward-facing; internal capacity-building, etc. Staff have studied peer State Arts Agency (SAA) plans from Mississippi, Ohio, Washington, and Massachusetts, among others. A few have provided great examples with cultural equity threads as well as sample language and structure.

Nisenson suggested the goal of today is to articulate our core values and mandates based on the overall feedback from the Town Hall.

The Commissioners, guided by Nisenson, brainstormed on new Mission and Values statements.

Draft Mission:

“VCA invests in the arts, in the Commonwealth by encouraging, supporting, and celebrating full participation in an innovative and creative culture that will benefit all Virginians.”

Staff and Commissioners brainstormed to identify the following values:

Creative Culture	Culture
Excellence	Catalyst/Inspiration
Equity	Empowerment
Accessibility	

Reports

Executive Director’s Report— Janet Starke

Creative Forces

The VCA and Starke continue to serve as the Project Director for the Community Connections Projects (for Ft. Belvoir and Hampton Roads Networks, respectively.) This is a project ‘contract’ under which we’ve been with Americans for the Arts, who distributes the funding as provided by National Endowment for the Arts. This is currently the only funding that has been provided by the Endowment. The Ft. Belvoir Network has largely carried out their project components, which included 1) an expanded guitar/ukulele program for veterans, caregivers/family members, provided by Hylton Performing Arts Center at George Mason University (GMU – Manassas); and 2) a series of expanded workshops for veterans, provided by Workhouse Arts Center (Lorton). Later in the spring, The Art League (Alexandria) will carry out their own series. In Hampton Roads, we will be conducting an Asset Mapping Session— in the Hampton Roads to

identify additional arts providers and potentially new participant groups. We will host a Teaching Artist Training Summit on March 21st in Richmond-with training provided by Armed Services Arts Partnership, who have developed a curriculum for artists to work with veteran populations. A further goal for the project(s) is the development of a Tool Kit for communities to develop their own networks (which may or may not be under the formal umbrella of Creative Forces.

The budget request to the administration includes an additional staff person to, in part, be dedicated to this area of work.

Fort Monroe African Landing Memorial

This is the ongoing collaboration with the Fort Monroe Authority and Foundation for the design and installation of a Public Art project commemorating the landing of the first enslaved Africans in the United States. Asa has been the commissioner working with Janet to guide the group through an RFP process and ultimate identification of the artist. Sculptor Brian Owens (of Florida) has been selected to be the artist. The working group will next be working to put together a listening tour for feedback from the community.

Art Works for Virginia 2020

This year's conference theme is *Arts + Social Justice: Community Solutions Through the Arts*, stemming from a body of work developed by Americans for the Arts in 2018. It notes the numerous intersections of the arts with community and individual living. Keynotes will be Bryan Doerries, a Newport News native, and co-founder of Theater of War Productions, joined by musical collaborator, Phil Woodmore.

Arts Education

Polczynski provided an update on the Poetry Out Loud program and an overview of planning for the upcoming Mid-Atlantic Teaching Artist Retreat in fall 2020, a program in which VCA partners with peer SAAs of the Mid Atlantic region.

Data and Its Many Uses

An overview of data collection tools and access was provided by Ryan Stubbs, Senior Director of Research with NASAA (National Assembly of State Arts Agencies).

Committees' Breakout Session

In the interest of time, and due to conflicting schedules of Commissioners, Committee meetings were postponed for a future meeting. These will be scheduled in advanced with Starke.

Old Business/New Business

Conrad opened the floor.

Goudie asked to verify the procedure and process for complimentary tickets to events. Starke continues to seek guidance from the Ethics Council. In the meantime, accepting complimentary tickets from time to time, from arts groups does serve as an important means of assessment of the artistic quality, accessibility, and other factors related to effective management of an organization. It's considered field work. Goudie suggested that, in the interim to document the process, including the date, location and the ticket value.

Jennings offered to the Commissioners to make suggestions to the policy committee about any concerns or issues.

Vice Chair Abigail Gomez has assumed the role of Co-Chair of the People of Color Affinity Group at NASAA (National Assembly of State Arts Agencies). Janet gave belated gratitude to Gomez for helping with the October Board Meeting and Town Hall in the Shenandoah Valley (Winchester), and thanked Terry Buntrock for helping with [this] meeting in Williamsburg.

The meeting was adjourned at 2 PM.